

# Freedom

August 29, 2004

## Watch

Air defenders focus on ground targets  
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Sgt. Frank Magni

## Home sweet home

Members of 2nd Bn., 5th Infantry Regiment, or Task Force Bobcat, deployed to Forward Operating Base Ripley, reside in these tents. Each tent houses up to two Soldiers and their personal gear. As members of Combined Task Force Bronco, TF Bobcat conducts stability operations in the Oruzgan Province, just north of Kandahar Airfield.

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Air defense artillerymen typically focus their sights on the sky, defending against enemy aircraft. In Afghanistan, Soldiers like Sgt. Geovanni Santoyo, 1st Bn., 62nd Air Defense Artillery Rgt., seen here pulling security during a convoy through Zabol Province, are finding unconventional uses for both their training and equipment.

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# Freedom Watch

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### Freedom Watch Staff

Commander – Maj. Steven J. Wollman

NCOIC – Staff Sgt. Monica R. Garreau

Editor – Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl

Journalists – Sgt. Frank Magni,

Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons, Spc. Dijon Rolle,

Pfc. Cheryl Ransford, Pfc. Chris Stump

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# CTF Bronco leadership meets with mullahs

Story and photo by  
Spc. Claudia K. Bullard  
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Combined Task Force Bronco Commander Col. Dick Pedersen met with local religious leaders at the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team's headquarters in Kandahar city Aug. 5. Pedersen and the mullahs, Muslim religious leaders trained in the doctrine and law of Islam, came together to discuss possible reconstruction projects and to build a common vision for Kandahar's future.

"We must spark hope and then turn hope into trust," said Pedersen. "In time, trust can turn into belief that the vision — the dream — can come true. Then the Afghan people can believe that the Afghan government and the international community can make these things happen."

Pedersen said this will take time and assured the leaders he was here to reinforce the commitment.

Mullah Fayeze, in charge of mosques and education for Kandahar province, was the spokesperson and leader of the participating mullahs.

Fayeze answered Pedersen's opening remarks by saying, "On behalf of my office, thank you to you and your Soldiers for leaving your family behind and coming here to repair Kandahar." Then, in Muslim tradition with hands open and palms up, Fayeze offered a prayer asking for forgiveness and a good life for all present and everyone in Afghanistan.

This is the second meeting between Pedersen and the mullahs since CTF Bronco took over operations at Kandahar Airfield in April, said Capt. Todd Schmidt, special assistant to the CTF Bronco commander. He said the meetings "build and maintain positive relationships with religious leaders."

Mullahs wield a strong moral authority that carries over to everyday village life, he said. This is especially true, considering 86 percent of the country is illiterate. Schmidt said the mullahs, by nature of their education, have authority and power in a village. The people seek them for advice because they are teachers who have made a pilgrimage to Mecca, giving them a world perspective.

Pedersen told the mullahs that, upon learning of his deployment, he began studying Afghan history, paying special attention to the last 25 years under the Soviets, the mujahedeen and the Taliban.

"For whatever the reason, the Afghan people have suffered. I have only studied it. You have lived it," said Pedersen.

Pedersen said the Coalition forces are here for two purposes. One is to drive out the insurgents and the other is to support the Afghan people.

"The way to drive out the insurgents is to reach out to the people, giving them a new message," said Pedersen. "We are here to help the Afghan people to build a better life for themselves."

To illustrate, he related a story of an infantry operation in the Arghandab Valley where, because there was no district leader, he met with some village elders. While drinking tea with them, he asked their leader if he could dream of an Arghandab Valley five years from now, what kind of place would it be.

The elder was obviously puzzled, so Pedersen clarified, asking the elder if he could imagine the Arghandab with peace, security, prosperity and education.

Pedersen said the village leader answered him saying, "I had such dreams once and the Soviets came and destroyed them. I dreamed these dreams again and the mujahedeen came and destroyed these dreams. And I dreamed them yet again and the Taliban came in and destroyed them, too."

Then the village elder asked Pedersen, "Are you here to build or to destroy?"

He told the village elder the Coalition is here to build. To the mullahs he said, "I tell you we are here to help the Afghan people to build a better life for themselves. Afghan leaders and Afghan people must learn to dream again of good things," said Pedersen. "We will build and not destroy."

As part of the rebuilding process, Pedersen laid down the bottom line by urging the mullahs to reject extremist ideology and embrace traditional Islam that is "in line with the Afghan government."

Fayeze agreed that this needed to be done, saying he and Pedersen shared the same view.

"The Afghan people have hope in the Coalition forces. The Soviets and Taliban also had good things to say, but finally people realized they were not here to rebuild.



**Col. Dick Pedersen (left), CTF Bronco commander, talks with local mullahs during a meeting in Kandahar city.**

A true and outspoken scholar would never take their side," said Fayeze. "The Taliban would not allow the true scholar to preach."

Fayeze thinks if schools are built in Kandahar, then the children will be able to get an education here under their scholars, instead of leaving the country.

"If we build a lot of schools and educate a lot of kids so the old way of thinking will not affect the younger generation, people will wake up and take the old knowledge out of their mind and come to new light," he said.

Fayeze understands the seriousness of dealing with extremist ideology. Four members of his office have been killed by Taliban recently. One of the mullahs who attended the first meeting last May has also been killed. Fayeze himself had been placed under house arrest by the Taliban for teaching "according to Islam. The Taliban did not want me preaching because the people would understand the true word."

But the Quran itself preaches persistence and patience, said Fayeze. He and members of his office continue to work every day despite fears of being killed.

As the meeting came to a close, Mullah Wakil Mehmodi, a poet as well as a holy man, stood before the group to tell about a dream he had in the "Soviet time." He said he dreamt in his mind and heart the whole world would become like one nation.

"People would welcome you like a family," he said. "I would like to see the whole world together, not fighting."

"God is in charge of all humankind, not just Islam. If one hand hurts, the whole body hurts," said Mehmodi. "The world should be like that. When one country hurts, the whole world should hurt."

# Tobacco Cessation class helps Soldiers kick the butt

**SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING:**  
Smoking Causes Lung Cancer,  
Heart Disease, Emphysema, And  
May Complicate Pregnancy.

Story by Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — The medics of Joint Task Force Wings are offering tobacco cessation classes for Coalition forces participating in Operation Enduring Freedom.

The goal of the class is to help Soldiers live healthier lives.

"We all know that tobacco causes lung cancer, but it goes beyond that," said Lt. Col. John Smyrski, JTF Wings physician. "It's total health. Our goal is, in addition to keeping people safe here, we're trying to help them improve their lifestyle."

In order to help Soldiers improve their health by quitting smoking and use of smokeless tobacco, the medics are offering a 12-week class.

Overcoming a habit as detrimental as tobacco use takes a lot of effort, said Sgt. Tracy Rawson, JTF Wings medical section noncommissioned officer in charge.

This is something Rawson knows firsthand. After nine years of smoking, and several half-hearted attempts at quitting on her own, she successfully quit with the help of the tobacco cessation group.

"Having other Soldiers around who were going through what I was gave me more motivation to quit," she said.

But first, she had to decide she wanted to quit.

"Soldiers have to be willing to participate in the class," said Rawson. "We tell them it's not going to be easy."

"We start off with an initial orientation and we tell the Soldiers that the first step is the toughest, and that's having the desire to quit," said Smyrski.

If service members decide they want to participate in the program, they start a series of 11 lectures.

"We talk about habit transfers and breaking the cycle (of) dependence on nicotine," he said.

The group meets for one hour each week to discuss the process of quitting. Having a support group is an important part of the program, said Rawson.

The Soldiers who attend the class have noticed the difference the support group makes as well.

"The small group support helps you because you get to see the others in your class weekly," said Pfc. Travis Smith, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 25th Aviation Brigade, JTF Wings, who quit smoking through the program. "You can say, 'Hey this is what my problems were this week

and this is how I faced them.' Then the group can give advice on how they would have handled that problem."

"The class is good because it gives you a good support environment," said Spc. Jason Cook, HHC, 25th Avn. Bde. "We're all trying to quit, so we kind of help each other out, give each other ideas on what works and what doesn't work. If someone has a problem, we can help them. It makes a better environment than trying to quit on your own and you don't have as much help trying to do it by yourself."

Those in the program can choose to use either a nicotine patch or Zyban, a medication that helps with cravings, said Smyrski. These two methods take away the physical need for tobacco. Then comes the tough part.

"The biggest hurdle is beating the habit of smoking," said Rawson.

The physical addiction is over after the first three days, she said. The rest of the program is about breaking habits. The class offers ideas on different things to do with your hands instead of smoking. Soldiers can learn to pick up better, healthier habits than smoking.

"Exercise is a big thing," said Rawson. "Keeping yourself occupied makes it easier to not smoke."

Having a support system is also important in the process of quitting tobacco use.

"We're out here by ourselves. We don't have our family support. So we use each other as a support system because that's who we're around every day," she said.

The Soldiers in the program have many different reasons to quit their tobacco habit.

"I want to do better on (physical training), and I quit for my son. I don't want him seeing me smoking as he grows up," said Cook.

Quitting smoking also helps the Soldiers on a professional level, as mission readiness can be adversely affected by tobacco use.

"Tobacco cessation is an important thing to the command," said Smyrski. "In addition to decreasing the number of Soldiers that come to sick call for minor respiratory problems, it raises the efficiency in the workplace. We're getting more productivity from the Soldiers."

Besides being a better asset to the unit, Soldiers who quit smoking and using smokeless tobacco have a better chance for a healthy future.

"It's really for improving your health," said Smyrski. "As Soldiers we feel that we're invincible, we're young and strong, and we can handle it and nothing is going to happen to me."

"But you have to look beyond that — to 30, 40, 50 years down the road when you're retired," he said. "We want you to be able to enjoy your life and spend time with your children and your grandchildren, and so it goes well beyond your time in the military."

The tobacco cessation class is available to anyone at Bagram Air Base who would like to quit using tobacco. To sign up for a seat in one of the upcoming classes, contact Rawson at the JTF Wings Aid Station, 231-2411.





# ANA kandak graduates from KMTC

Story and photo by

Col. Randy Pullen

Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan — The newest kandak (battalion) of the Afghan National Army graduated from the Kabul Military Training Center July 22.

The 21st kandak to graduate from the KMTC, made up of more than 800 officers, noncommissioned officers and soldiers, formed up on the parade field in front of a large audience of Afghan and Coalition dignitaries for the graduation ceremony. Also watching were the Coalition members of Task Force Phoenix who had worked alongside the ANA soldiers throughout their 10 weeks of training.

The ceremony began with ANA Gen. Bismullah Khan, chief of the General Staff, reviewing the assembled troops, each soldier wearing a green beret to signify his status as a trained Afghan soldier. After Khan returned to the reviewing stand, an ANA soldier read a verse from the Quran, followed by the playing of the Afghan national anthem.

ANA Brig. Gen. Ghulam Sakhi Asifi, KMTC commander, told the graduating soldiers the role of the ANA is keeping Afghanistan safe and secure as it works toward reconstruction.

"The ANA belongs to the whole nation," said Asifi. "Your graduation strengthens the ANA and helps the nation to succeed with its national goals."



**ANA Gen. Bismullah Khan, chief of the General Staff, reviews graduating soldiers from the Kabul Military Training Center during the commencement ceremony July 22.**

Since Sept. 11, 2001, the world understands how important it is to have a stable Afghanistan, said Khan. He told the graduating officers, NCOs and soldiers they had a big responsibility to the Afghan people and the Coalition to help build stability in Afghanistan.

He advised them to continue to improve their skills and education as soldiers in order to better fight the enemies of Afghanistan.

"We are facing terrorists who use different kinds of techniques to create problems and disturb the peace and security in Afghanistan," said Khan. "You must be professionally ready to resist them and prevent them from succeeding with their actions."

He congratulated them on graduating and wished them much success. He also reminded them of their heritage.

"You are the sons of your brave ancestors," said Khan. "You must stay firm in your positions and defend the nation."

After the speeches, the Coalition instructors from Task Force Phoenix were recognized. Then the outstanding graduating NCOs and soldiers received awards from the reviewing dignitaries.

As each soldier received his individual award, he turned around to face the kandak and shouted, "I serve the Afghan nation!"

The kandak then marched past the stand for review.

Before the graduation ceremony was over, there was one final event. A group of soldiers came forward to do a ceremonial dance, traditionally performed to mark momentous and happy events – an indication of the conclusion of 10 weeks of extensive training.

There are now more than 13,000 soldiers in the Afghan National Army. The soldiers of the newest kandak will soon be joining their comrades in the army's Central Corps or in the four new Regional Commands being established in Kandahar, Gardez, Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat. They join an operational and deployed army, with ANA units conducting combat operations in the south and east alongside the Coalition and carrying out stability and security operations in the north and west.

But no matter where they go when they depart the grounds of the KMTC, what they shouted at the ceremony will ring true – they will be serving the Afghan nation.

## Enduring Voices

*What has been your best experience in Afghanistan?*



**Master Sgt.  
Julio Bensimon**

JLC

*"I got to do the job I was trained to do and see the results of all my training."*



**Spc. David Boynton**

210th Eng. Det.  
New Hampshire N.G.

*"Being able to work with the aircraft on the flight line."*



**Vai Rizer**

AAFES PX manager

*"Being able to meet a lot of different people."*



**Marine Lance Cpl.  
Roberto Suarez**

3rd Bn., 6th Marines

*"Seeing all the different people of Afghanistan."*

# Coalition donates vehicles to Sarobi police

Story and photos by  
Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

SAROBİ DISTRICT, Afghanistan — The Soldiers of the Parwan Provincial Reconstruction Team gave two police vehicles to the police department in the Sarobi District of Afghanistan.

The four-wheel drive pickups were purchased with Commander's Emergency Relief Program funds from Combined Task Force Thunder.

"Sarobi is a district in the Kabul Province that is very important to us because of the Nagalo Dam," said Maj. Christine Nichols, Parwan PRT Civil Affairs team leader.

"They are high on our priority list to receive police vehicles. That's why they received two today."

The area the Sarobi police have to cover is very large, said Master Sgt. Jeffrey White, Civil Affairs team noncommissioned officer. Just driving to some of these areas takes several hours, making it imperative for the police force to have vehicles to establish a strong presence.

Having the police show their presence throughout the region improves the security, said Nichols.

"It's a quicker way for them to get out and about instead of them just being in the police station or walking, foot patrolling the immediate area," she said.

Vehicles make the policemen's job much easier, said Gulam Farooq, an election delegate from the Uzbeen District.

"(The police) do a very good job for us, and having vehicles makes it easier if something happens somewhere. They have transportation and they can be quick."

Empowering the police system is a priority, said Maj. Charles Westover, Parwan PRT commander. "A strong police force is the tip of the spear when it comes to stabi-



**General Doaud, Sarobi Police Chief, thanks Maj. Christine Nichols, Parwan PRT civil affairs team leader, after she gave him the keys to two new police vehicles.**

lizing this country."

But the relationship between Coalition forces and the Afghan police force isn't just about receiving new vehicles.

"It's very important to have a good relationship between Coalition forces and the Afghan police," said Nichols. "The biggest thing in Afghanistan right now is security so the election goes off successfully and the country can function independently."

"Our cooperation with Coalition forces has been good," said General Doaud,

Sarobi District police chief. "The whole time I've been here, I've cooperated with the Coalition forces and we have contact with each other often."

The Afghan police are doing well, said Nichols.

"They are receptive to our presence here. General Doaud helps us out with our projects and tells us what's going on in the area. We also have regular meetings with the police and the governors and mayors to find out what's going on."

The success of the police force has already been seen in

the voter registration process, said Farooq.

"It's because the police help us that we have had a successful registration," he said. "If the police were not here, we would not have been as successful."

And as the Afghan police become more capable and better equipped, the security of the region will be heightened.

Giving them equipment such as vehicles, communications equipment and training, makes the Afghan police force much better, said Westover.

"The better the police are, the more security there will be," he said.

"Once you provide security, we can bring in non-governmental organizations that have been afraid to come to some of these areas because of security," said White. "They can start building schools, hospitals, bridges, dams and all the other infrastructure that needs to be rebuilt."

The goal of the Coalition and local police is to instill a sense of security and freedom in the people of Afghanistan, said Nichols. A well-equipped police force is a step in the right direction.



**A Soldier dismounts from a new police vehicle, during the delivery to the Sarobi Police Department. These vehicles were purchased by the Parwan PRT with CERP funds.**



# J-Bad PRT supports stable environment

Story and photo by Pfc. Chris Stump  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

JALALABAD, Afghanistan — Provincial reconstruction teams have a broad focus. From establishing security to reconstruction, the Jalalabad PRT is constantly working to promote a stable environment within their region.

Every day, the infantrymen assigned to provide force protection for the PRT, patrol the provinces of Nangahar, Laghman and Nuristan to show Afghans in these areas the reach of Coalition influence and reconstruction efforts.

In order to complete the numerous projects they are currently managing, the PRT first needs security, said Sgt. 1st Class Michael D. Baker, 401st Civil Affairs Battalion, Civil Affairs Team-Alpha team sergeant.

That's what the Soldiers of 3rd Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry Regiment are here to do. The infantrymen of the platoon provide security for the many meetings the civil affairs team has with local leaders to discuss everything from ongoing public improvement projects, to the Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army helping to bring stability to the region, said Spc. Kelly Alsbury, Co. A, 1st Bn., 168th Inf. Rgt., grenadier.

"We mostly provide convoy protection and security to the civil affairs team," he said. "But we're also out here showing the locals that we reach areas that are far away from the PRT and that we are able to help them."

"Our patrols also show that we are still here and that we care about the region."

Showing that the Coalition cares about the people and is trying to better their lives is one of the main goals of the PRT, said Baker.

"We have over 130 ongoing projects right now," he said.

These projects range from a single well to contracting out work for the construction of radio towers that will handle 90 percent of police communications in the area.

One of these projects, dubbed "Move the Mountain," was an effort typical of what the civil affairs team tries to do in the area — involve as many different people as possible, said Baker.

The project was to build a clinic. When the clinic was finished, an organization outside the PRT donated a maternity wing to the hospital, he said.



**Maj. Paul Toth, 401st CA Bn., Civil Affairs Team-Alpha team leader, talks with a construction foreman during an assessment of a local construction project in Laghman Province. The CAT-A is responsible for managing reconstruction projects in the area.**

The new wing interfered with a road, which needed to be rerouted. Local nationals were hired to reroute the road through a hill, giving the project the name "Move the Mountain."

"In this instance, we had a three-way success," said Baker. "We contracted out to build the hospital — providing an economic boost to the community, we got an NGO involved and hired a lot of local labor to move the road."

The PRT relies on the local labor force as much as possible.

"These Afghans can build anything," said Baker. "Some of the ways they build, they have been using for hundreds of years."

It's not completely up to the locals to do everything though, he said. The PRT's officers and noncommissioned officers spend much of their time managing projects and traveling through the region inspecting projects, ensuring they're completed on schedule and to standard.

A school construction site was one project the PRT recently inspected. The school is a construction effort employing the skills of more than 20 Afghans, said Sayedlias, site construction foreman.

The site will eventually be a girls' school, something Sayedlias says he is grateful for.

"It will also be good for the girls. Right

now they have no school and they must sit outside and learn," said Sayedlias. "The education of our girls is important, just like education for the boys."

"Without the PRT's help, I don't think this would be possible," he added. "We are happy for the contract from the PRT. We are glad they help us manage it and employ so many people."

In addition to inspecting for quality, the PRT also manages the projects to ensure workers are paid and treated fairly.

"It's all about benefiting the people," said Baker.

Through their many meetings with local leaders and their numerous projects, the PRT members are showing the people there is a bright future.

In a conversation with a local ANP commander, Baker said, "It's an exciting time for us to be here. It's a time when everything is changing. As long as security continues to improve, we can come out and do projects."

Though initial projects are small-scale, gradually they will grow in size and have an even larger impact. These projects, combined with reconstruction efforts in other regions of Afghanistan, will help develop the country.

"We have to fix the village before we can fix the country," said Baker.

# ADA adapts to Afghanistan mission

Story and photos by  
Sgt. Frank Magni  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Of the many tactics anti-Coalition militants employ against the Coalition, none of them have ever involved aircraft. Without an immediate threat from above, organic air defense artillery assets within Combined Task Force Bronco are using their personnel and equipment for threats on the ground.

While systems like the Avenger and Sentinel radar were designed for conventional air threats, ADA Soldiers from Battery A, 1st Battalion, 62nd Air Defense Artillery Regiment, are finding unconventional uses for their equipment on the battlefields of Operation Enduring Freedom.

With their eyes not on the skies, many of the ADA Soldiers now perform the tasks of convoy escort, perimeter security, and even as maneuver elements in support of CTF Bronco.

"Since day one we have been providing security and maneuvering with the infantry," said 1st Lt. Tim Bible, Btry. A, 1st Bn., 62nd ADA Rgt., platoon leader. "But this was no surprise to us."

In preparation for their new role, the unit began training months before setting foot in Afghanistan.

Last August, the unit deployed with 2nd Bn., 35th Inf. Rgt., to the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif.

"We trained inside the Box (maneuver area) for 30 days, focusing primarily on our ground mission," said Sgt. 1st Class Juan Ferreira, Btry. A, 1st Bn., 62nd ADA Rgt., platoon sergeant. "From convoy live fires to cordon and searches, we got a good idea of what our new role would be."

After returning from the exercise, the unit also participated in training exercises with



**Pfc. Jose Mares, Co. A, 1st Bn., 62nd Air Defense Artillery Rgt., looks out from the turret of an Avenger weapon system.**

the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division (Light) in Hawaii. Again, they performed more of their maneuver element role, said Ferreira.

Since hitting the ground in Afghanistan, the unit has even incorporated weapons like the MK-19 grenade launcher and sniper rifles in to certain platoons. But it's the Avenger weapon system that is gaining popularity on patrols.

While its Stinger missile pods are normally its primary weapon in air defense, its secondary weapon — the M3P .50 caliber machine gun — is its bread and butter in Afghanistan, said Bible.

"The M3P has many advantages over not only the M-2 .50 caliber machine gun, but many of the crew-served weapons mounted on top of vehicles," he said.

The M3P's longer barrel gives it increased range. It also has an advanced target acquisition system that puts it ahead of traditional crew-served weapons.

Normally designed for detecting aircraft, the Forward Looking Infrared system has night-vision capability and can adjust for inclement weather like dust storms, said Ferreira.

The turret on the Avenger also has major advantages while passing high valley walls and ridgelines, said Bible.

"Sometimes threats are straight up when we are traveling through valleys," said Bible.

The Avenger can engage those enemy straight up in the air, whereas traditional crew-served weapons

would have problems, said Bible.

The appearance of the Avenger also has a psychological effect on the enemy, said Capt. Todd Schmidt, special assistant to the CTF Bronco commander.

"The psychological impact of seeing a weapon like the Avenger is enough to deter some attacks," he said.

"The primary use for the Avenger has been perimeter security and we use it in blocking procedures during cordon and search operations," said Bible. "With the Avenger, we make sure nobody enters an area of operations and nobody leaves."

The Avenger isn't the only ADA system getting into the act in Afghanistan. The Sentinel radar system, normally used for monitoring airspace, is being used to track friendly aircraft.

"The Sentinel radar teams are being deployed to bases that have an increased amount of air traffic, but don't have a control tower," said Schmidt. "It is just a tool for unit commanders for air space command and control."

While the equipment still stands ready to execute its traditional mission, the one asset contributing most to the success of CTF Bronco is the Soldiers, said Schmidt.

"The way our unit has adapted here illustrates the versatility of the U.S. Soldier," he said.

Schmidt said he couldn't have expected a better reaction to the new mission.

"They have embraced every mission put in front of them," he said, "and have become very viable assets to Bronco commanders."



**Spc. Jerry Bass, Co. A, 1st Bn., 62nd ADA Rgt., pulls security from the top of an Avenger while on a security halt in Zabul Province.**



# Coalition makes a difference for Afghans

Story and photo by  
Sgt. 1st Class Matthew A. Fearing  
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — The convoy crested a dusty hill and the riders could see Shah Wali Kot below. The village is nestled in a small valley with brown hills that reach skyward on either side. Children in the village stopped to look as vehicles rolled into town. They turned and waved.

This was not the first time the Americans had come to their village and their faces displayed the eagerness with which the visit was welcomed.

Shah Wali Kot is slightly larger than many rural villages in the area. At least 20 buildings dot the town's landscape. Some homes sit on the hillsides, while others line the road that follows the valley.

More than 50 volunteers from Kandahar Airfield came to help on the "Make a Difference Day," July 24. The event was organized by the Soldiers of 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment. Getting up early and riding more than two hours to reach the village north of Kandahar, the volunteers descended on Shah Wali Kot's school to fix up the building and give the classrooms a fresh coat of paint. Under Taliban rule, the school had been used as a jail.

While observing the work being done to repair the school, Lt. Col. Mike McMahon, 3rd Sqdn., 4th Cav. Rgt., commander, pointed out the improvements being made.

"Those windows were full of bricks from when the Taliban used the building as a jail," he said. "We're here to help (clean up the school) and make this a community project." The improvements were a joint effort between the American volunteers and the people of Shah Wali Kot.

Along with the civilian and military volunteers from Kandahar Airfield, McMahon noted all the children working on the school.

"They're the future of Afghanistan. They're the ones that jump in and join us," he said smiling. Some children were pushing brooms, sweeping away the dust. Some had paint brushes and were painting walls, the green and white paint dripping on their hands and spatters going into their hair. All of them grinned widely as they worked.

Running from room to room to check on the progress, 2nd Lt. Jamie

McNamara, 3rd Sqdn., 4th Cav. Rgt., was the task organizer for the school project. She only slowed down to share a smile with a small Afghan girl, Negeba, who followed McNamara nearly everywhere she went. The relationship between the two began two weeks prior when a smaller group of volunteers from 3rd Sqdn., 4th Cav. Rgt., came to start the work on the school.

The first trip was scheduled to clean up the building and get it ready for painting. Both days, McNamara coordinated the worker's efforts while jumping into the work herself.

"Jamie!" a very young Afghan boy called. He smiled and beckoned for her to come see what he had accomplished. The scene was repeated with different children calling the lieutenant to talk to them or see what they had done.

Capt. Nelsa Caceres-Agosto, commander of the Arrival/Departure Airport Control Group, also brought eight service members out to help. Her group, a mix of Soldiers and Airmen, were glad to share in the experience. Each of them indicated they wanted to help the Afghans and see more of the area around Kandahar.

"I wanted to see what Afghanistan looked like," said Staff Sgt. Annette D. Garcia, 376th Expeditionary Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron radio operator.

They weren't the only ones glad to have an opportunity to see more of the countryside.

"This was something the (Soviets) never did here — to approach and take care of the people," said Staff Sgt. Darrell Osborne, 3rd Sqdn., 4th Cav. Rgt.

Wahdat, an interpreter for the mission, grabbed a paint brush and joined in the work.

"I am volunteering since I have to be here anyway," he said jokingly. He walked over to Agosto and pretended to paint her head. They laughed and the two resumed painting the walls of one of the larger classrooms.

In the afternoon, as the clean up and painting continued, McMahon met with the village elders and school officials. He listened to their concerns and needs as Wahdat translated the

conversation. They seemed pleased.

All the work on the school would mean that the children of the Shah Wali Kot district would have a place to study and learn. Teachers would no longer need to search for space to hold classes.

The inability to hold regular classes made it difficult to assess the number of students that might attend the school. Through the work of the community and volunteers, young people will now have a place to attend school regularly.

After the school was cleaned up and the rooms painted, the villagers and the volunteers gathered on the porch of a nearby building. Everyone shared the local bread, watermelon and grapes offered by the villagers.

Tired from the work and heat, the volunteers were ready to get back to Kandahar.

Spc. Folet Dussault, Troop D, 3rd Sqdn., 4th Cav. Rgt., captured the group's mood. On the way out of the village he said, "It was a long, tiring day. But it was a good day."

With that, the convoy crested the hill and Shah Wali Kot dropped from view.



**Negeba paints a wall in a Shah Wali Kot classroom. She assisted the Coalition members who visited her village during the "Make a Difference Day" renovation project.**

# Afghan police prepare for upcoming elections

Story and photos by  
Pfc. Chris Stump  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

JALALABAD, Afghanistan — With Afghanistan's presidential election quickly approaching, the nation's police are gearing up to handle this busy time. They are not only preparing to ensure the election goes smoothly, but are also learning how to handle any crisis that may arise.

The Jalalabad Police Department's quick reaction force is currently sending its policemen through a refresher course on police tactics, first aid and explosives, which is taught by U.S. Army military policemen, medics and an explosive ordnance disposal team at the Jalalabad Provincial Reconstruction Team site.

The first class of 20 Afghan National Police graduated from the Police Tactical Advisory Team's four-day refresher course in July. During the course, the policemen brushed up on vital skills they may need in the coming months, said Staff Sgt. Albert Matel, 58th Military Police Company PTAT team leader.

The PTAT, in conjunction with EOD and the PRT's medics, used their skills to teach the police officers additional skills and help them become more proficient by administering practical exercises, he said.

This group of Afghan policemen was just the first of four that will take the PTAT refresher course, said Matel.

As the Jalalabad Police Department's quick reaction force, "they'll be the first ones on the scene to see what is happen-

ing, or has happened. It's important they know their stuff," said Spc. Jerald Stephens, 58th MP Co. PTAT team member.

The PTAT, medics from the PRT and an EOD team went over many of the basic skills the policemen may need to use during a busy time like elections, he said.

Among the skills were protecting a crime scene, reacting to a bomb threat, searching vehicles and personnel, and setting up a traffic control point.

"There's a good chance they'll have to use many of these skills we went over when the elections happen. They've already learned all these procedures, we are just going over them again to ensure they know it well," said Stephens.

They're all tactics the police must be sharp on, said Col. Mohammed Kaun, Jalalabad Police Department training officer and course attendee.

"In this training we had practical exercises that will help us very much if something happens," he said.

These exercises ranged from hands-on vehicle and personnel searches to operating traffic control points.

The types of exercises the policemen practiced in the class were those they will almost certainly see while on duty, said Stephens.

During the elections, villages throughout Afghanistan will be busier than normal and there will be an increased threat level from those wanting to disrupt the elections, said Matel.

This increased threat level places even more pressure on the policemen, and adds to the necessity of the course.

These police weren't only made more aware of what to look for in stopping acts of terrorism, though.

The class also refreshed invaluable life-saving skills through a class resembling the U.S. Army's Combat Lifesaver Course, said Spc. Lance Morrow, Co. A, 1st Battalion, 168th



**Spc. Jerald Stephens, 58th MP Co., congratulates a Jalalabad policeman after his graduation from the PTAT's ANP refresher course.**

Infantry Regiment, medic and instructor at the course.

"We're reinforcing their training on the basics like field dressings, burns and (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) – things they could definitely see while they are out patrolling," said Morrow.

"It's stuff all policemen should know – especially first responders to the scene of an accident."

Some situations, though, may require more than first aid. They may involve getting rid of a threat before first aid even becomes necessary, such as the threat posed by an improvised explosive device.

This is where the EOD team brought their background to the table.

"Our main goal in the EOD instruction was to make them aware of the different devices that can be used," said Sgt. 1st Class Mark D. Simeroth, 754th Ordnance Company (EOD).

The class learned many of the tactics terrorists could implement in an IED attack, and the fact that there is often more than one device used.

"With the upcoming elections they have to be prepared for anything," said Simeroth.

"They already have most of the skills," said Matel. "We just wanted to add what we could and make them as proficient as possible."



**Sgt. Troy McIntosh, 1st Bn., 168th Inf. Rgt., medic, instructs Jalalabad policemen on the proper way to apply a field dressing.**



# PRT helps Ghazni Province progress

Story and photos by  
Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

GHAZNI PROVINCE, Afghanistan — In many regions of Afghanistan, provincial reconstruction teams are helping the people rebuild their war-torn country.

It's the same in Ghazni Province. A group of Coalition Soldiers, joined by a representative from the U.S. Agency for International Development and a representative from the Afghan national government's Ministry of the Interior, are working together to make improvements across the province.

"We currently have 64 (Commander's Emergency Relief Program) projects in progress," said Lt. Col. Steven J. Ford, Ghazni PRT commander. "We've completed about 90 projects in the last seven months."

These projects range from rebuilding schools and hospitals, to paving roads, digging wells and building a library that now boasts more than 1,000 volumes. They also donate supplies to establishments, including schools, hospitals and orphanages.

"We've spent around \$5 million this fiscal year," said Allen Nugent, Ghazni PRT's USAID representative. USAID is an organization that provides funding for development in countries around the world.

The PRT isn't just there for the reconstruction efforts, however. They also play a great role in establishing a link between the Coalition, the Afghan national government and the local nationals.

"We are a non-lethal weapon system," said Maj. Scott C. Ford, Ghazni PRT's Civil Military Operations Center commander. "We engage the target audience



**Soldiers from the Ghazni PRT talk with villagers in the province. The PRT establishes relationships with the local citizens, furthering the Coalition's reach in the area.**

and develop strong working relationships with the people in the area."

One of the strong working relationships they have developed is with the local government.

"We facilitate communication between the (Afghan) government organizations and the military," said the PRT commander.

With this communication, the PRT is helping the rest of the Coalition win the war on terror.

"The people here are starting to see that we're here to do good," said Sgt. Daniel Toleno, Ghazni PRT engineer. "We've had situations where the locals have detained (suspicious) people because we helped them with projects," keeping at least one more anti-Coalition militant from hindering the process of establishing a safer, more stable Afghanistan.

Toleno is assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 367th Engineer Battalion, U.S. Army Reserve, but is currently working with Company C, 367th Eng. Bn.

Much of his time is spent interacting with the local popu-

lation, especially the contractors who are hired to complete PRT projects.

Toleno's position requires him to monitor the contractors, but he also has the opportunity to impart his knowledge as an engineer.

"Every time I'm on a site I have the opportunity to talk to the contractors and find out what tools and equipment they think will make their job easier," said Toleno. "I also do my best to help them find improved ways of doing things with the materials they have. They're learning to explore better options."

By helping the local population to develop in any way they can, the PRT is building strong bonds with their neighbors in Ghazni.

"We're here to

facilitate enduring security, galvanize the Afghan people and assist with reconstruction," said the PRT commander.

The PRT reaches its goals of stability and reconstruction one project and one conversation at a time.



**A patient approaches the Ghazni Hospital, which has been refurbished by the PRT.**

# AF forecasters track Afghan weather

Story and photos by  
Air Force Master Sgt.  
Andrew Gates

Andrew Gates  
455th Expeditionary Operations Group

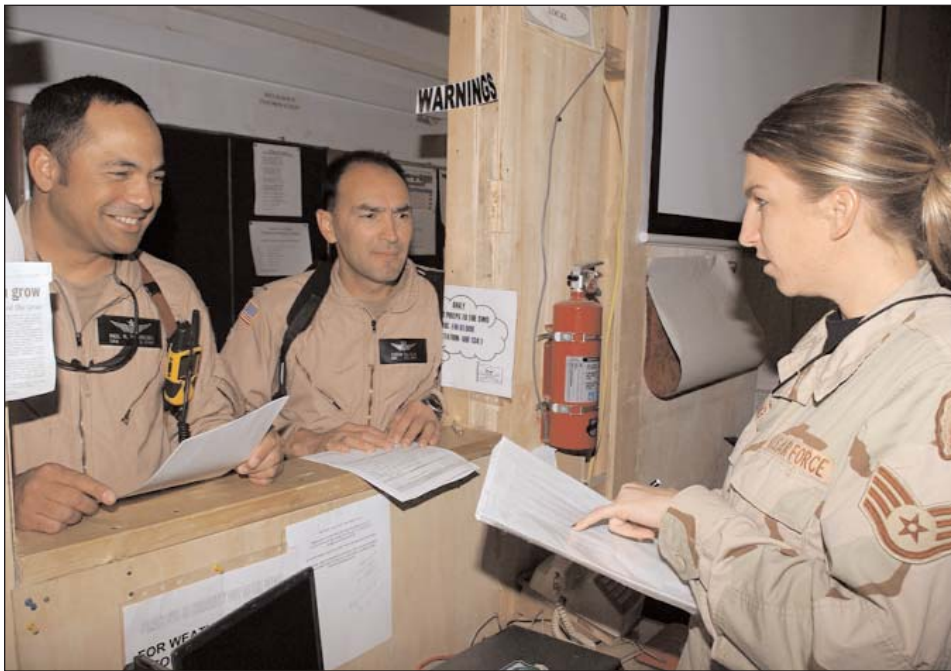
BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — No matter what the season, the weather changes quickly in the mountains of Afghanistan. Within 30 minutes, the skies can go from clear blue to dark and stormy. Or the wind can pick up drastically, picking up dust and reducing visibility.

With air and ground forces conducting operations around the clock, many organizations need to know what the weather is, or what it will be in the future. A team of Airmen here ensures those organizations get accurate information.

“We provide support to all the Coalition forces here at Bagram or at any other location in Afghanistan — including the forward operating bases,” said Air Force Maj. Ann Gravier, lead weather officer for 12 forecasters at Bagram.

“We support on-going operations, protect resources and help with planning,” she said. “For instance, if a commander knows he will be operating in a certain area in five days, he’ll get with us to find out what the projected weather is for the area — that way, he can determine how weather can impact his operation.”

“The weather support we provide to the aviators, ground forces and decision makers is instrumental to the success of on-going operations,” said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Christopher Blanch, weather operations noncommissioned officer in charge. “The observed and forecast weather



**Air Force Staff Sgt. Alison Long, CJTF-76 weather forecaster, briefs Chief Warrant Officers Neil Hermoso (left) and Fabian Salazar prior to a mission.**

information we relay to battlefield commanders is key to the planning process and will sometimes make or break a mission. Knowing when and where bad weather will hit allows troops to move to safer locations.”

Accurately predicting the weather is extremely important.

“Commanders will make a decision whether a particular mission will go or not,” said Air Force Staff Sgt. Sherdean Brisendine, one of the 12 forecasters. “If the crosswinds are too high or the visibility is too low, the weather can cancel a mission. We have to make sure we give the commander the information he needs to make a wise decision on weather — it gives him additional situational awareness.”

Since wind speeds can go from 11 knots, about 12 mph, to 35 knots, about 40 mph, in about 30 minutes, “we also report rapidly changing conditions and warn of thunderstorms and high winds,” said Brisendine.

Without many of the traditional tools, the forecasters here have to go back to basic observation skills to determine what

the weather may be.

“You have to go outside and look — find out ‘what does it look like out there?’ ” said Brisendine.

Finding out what it “looks like out there,” gives the weather forecasters more information to be able to improve future predictions.

“We have to collect as much data as we can,” said Gravier. “It’s important to be able to observe the weather around the clock. We really rely on forecasting skills and knowledge here.”

That knowledge is also useful during the weather briefings. Most of the forecasters here have had experience in the units they provide assistance to. For example, Brisendine comes from Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, the home of the A-10 Thunderbolt II unit currently stationed at Bagram. On the other hand, Air Force Staff Sgt. Alison Long hails from Wheeler Army Air Field in Hawaii. She provides weather forecasting for Army ground forces deployed here from Hawaii.

“It’s helpful that I have worked and trained with these people long before I got here,” said Long. “I know their specific sensitivities, and know what they will need to know about weather. Many of the weather briefings I do are for helicopter pilots — they need to know different information from the fixed wing pilots.”



**Air Force Staff Sgt. Sherdean Brisendine, 455th EOG weather forecaster, adjusts the Tactical Meteorological Observation System, used to assist forecasters in recording weather information.**



# OPSEC is everyone's responsibility

## Safeguarding the Coalition

Story by Sgt. Frank Magni  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

AFGHANISTAN — While one Coalition member at the phone center talks to his family about his quick reaction force mission, another at the gym discusses the possibility of an operation in a province just east of Kandahar. Finally, a Soldier e-mails his friend in Iraq, telling him he just returned from an 18-day cordon and search mission.

Alone, each piece of information is vague and doesn't reveal a lot. But when combined, a larger picture can appear to anyone listening.

"(Operational security) is about saving lives," said Sgt. Maj. Gordon Cross, Combined Joint Task Force-76 intelligence and security cell sergeant major. "From general down to private, OPSEC is the concern of everybody."

Cross said even with all the extensive procedures the Coalition takes to protect secret information and security measures, the careless actions of service members can undermine those efforts and put lives in danger.

One particular area of concern is the information individuals can reveal when communicating to family and friends.

Every person needs to ask themselves the same question, "What does your family really want to know," he said. "They want to know that you are doing OK. A family would rather know less and keep

you safe, than know more and put your life in jeopardy."

Staff Sgt. Lenwood Redd, 58th Military Police Company platoon sergeant, said he emphasizes OPSEC to his Soldiers every day — especially in reference to talking to family and friends.

"I tell my Soldiers, if somebody asks you what your mission is over here, you respond with what we (Coalition) are really doing over here," said Redd. "You are here to help establish a government for Afghanistan and provide security."

"As a leader I know that everybody's family is worried about their safety," he said. "Talking about specific information won't put their minds at ease."

There are key pieces of information that should never be mentioned, said Cross. The first is the type and classification of future missions or operations.

"Using terms like cordon and search or (quick reaction force) are indicators to help the enemy narrow down what you might be talking about," he said.

Other key pieces of information indicate dates, times and lengths of missions. Not only should you avoid specific departure or arrival times, but avoid broad time periods, like days or even weeks.

He said service members frequently give away procedural information without even realizing it.

"My squad was sent out on a QRF mission last night 30 minutes after the rocket attack," is a statement that the enemy can pull many different key pieces of information from," said Cross. "If the enemy hears that statement, they know a squad-sized element will respond 30 minutes after a rocket attack."

Even non-operational information gives the enemy a glimpse into the activities of Coalition forces.

"Infantry Soldiers conducting operations aren't the only personnel with critical information," said Cross. "Logistical and support personnel can give the enemy just as much information about upcoming operations."

Information about supply types, amounts and their destination are all indicators of where future operations could be taking place, or sizes of forces in a specific area, he said.

Communication over unsecured telephones, cell phones, satellite phones and computers send vital operational information around the world, but it's not the only way information is leaked.

Listening to conversations between service members on base is another way the enemy can gather information about Coalition forces and activities.

"There are a lot of local nationals and contractors that work on bases," said Cross. "They are not necessarily adversaries, but they should not hear certain information."

Places like the post exchange, coffee shop, gym and dining facilities are not places to discuss operations, he said.

Cross warns that even in secure areas Coalition members should still be aware of their surroundings.

"Walking down the hall, in restrooms, don't get a false sense of security because an area is considered secure," said Cross. "Contractors and work details could still be in the area."

Entering and exiting these secure facilities are also big concerns for maintaining OPSEC. Security badges needed within these areas should not be displayed in non-secure areas.

Displaying badges in non-secure areas can be harmful to an individual.

"You may end up making yourself a target," he said. "You are telling your adversary your level of clearance and access. The badge is telling somebody you know more than somebody else."

Also, displaying a badge gives the enemy an opportunity to study and possibly replicate it.

Every Coalition member should also take proactive steps in ensuring security is being enforced, said Cross. Service members should always be on the lookout for suspicious activity.

"If you think something is wrong — report it," he said.

Use your chain of command, security channels or report a possible security violation to the military police.

"I always emphasize to my Soldiers to be on the lookout," said Redd. "If something feels like it's not right — if a vehicle looks like it's parked in the wrong space, if a person looks like they aren't supposed to be there — make sure somebody else knows."

Cross concluded that OPSEC is everyone's responsibility.

"It only takes a couple weak links for our total security to fail," he said.



Pfc. Chris Stump

**Soldiers should be aware of operational security measures when corresponding via unsecure communication lines.**

# Deployment brings family together again

## *OEF reunites cousins after 10-year separation*

Story and photo by  
Sgt. Frank Magni  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — The last time Sgt. Eric Weaver and Staff Sgt. Rick Bashore saw each other, they were still in elementary school. Bashore was moving, and the two cousins had no idea it would be more than 10 years before they would see each other again.

As cousins, the two spent a substantial amount of their childhood together in Fredericksburg, Pa. Bashore even lived with Weaver's family for the summer. During family reunions, campouts and holiday gatherings, the two remember always playing together.

Through a turn of events the two lost touch, until Weaver, now 23, was in a dining facility here when he thought he recognized the name and face of a Soldier sitting at the next table. After introducing himself, it took Bashore, now 25, a second to realize the same cousin he used to go to barbecues with, was now deployed in Afghanistan as a military policeman with the 551st Military Police Company, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), from Fort Campbell, Ky.

With the chances of both being deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom at the same time being unlikely in the first place, their mission in Afghanistan made the chances of the two being on Bagram at the same time even more coincidental.

Bashore, a squad leader with Company A, 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, from Fort Richardson, was only on Bagram for a few weeks before his unit redeployed back to Alaska.

And Weaver was in the process of transitioning from missions in Kabul to Kandahar Airfield with his unit.

"I would think the chances of us meeting here would be slim to none," said Bashore.

No matter how unlikely the reunion was, the two made the most of the few days they were in the same location.

"We are spending a lot of time just catching up," said Weaver. "It is really good to see how well he's doing."

The cousins said most of their conversations were about the different places they have been so far in their careers.

Weaver has spent almost four of his five years in the Army stationed overseas. After three and half years of being stationed in Korea, Weaver transferred to Fort Campbell. Now he is on his first deployment, providing security in Afghanistan.

Bashore already has two deployments under his belt. Nine months here and another six in Kosovo have made him the deployment veteran of the family.

Hearing about his experience in a deployed environment, Weaver said he has been getting some tips from Bashore.

"I just tell him that it is a huge learning

experience here," Bashore said. "I know I learned things over here that I would have never learned during a training exercise back in the States."

Aside from exchanging Army knowledge and war stories, the cousins said they have spent their time talking about family.

Bashore even had the opportunity to talk to Weaver's mother and grandmother.

"They were very happy to talk to him," said Weaver. "This meeting is actually reuniting a part of our family in a way."

In all, the cousins got to spend about four days together. Time they both said they appreciate.

"This was a huge morale booster for me," said Bashore.

They are both trying to make plans to meet again, this time maybe back in Pennsylvania, where the majority of their extended family still lives. With Bashore still stationed in Alaska and Weaver having more than eight months left in Afghanistan, they said it would be hard to make any definite plans at this point.

But Weaver said they both plan to stay in touch as neither is counting on another chance encounter at a dining facility in Afghanistan.



**Staff Sgt. Rick Bashore (left), Co. A, 1st Bn., 501st Para. Inf. Rgt., talks with his cousin, Sgt. Eric Weaver, 551st MP Co., on Bagram Air Base. The two cousins reunited by chance on Bagram after not seeing each other for more than 10 years.**



# 'Gators' help Coalition get the job done

Story by Spc. Dijon Rolle  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RIPLEY, Afghanistan — It's common throughout several Coalition-maintained bases in Afghanistan to see small green- or tan-colored, all-terrain vehicles maneuvering through the country's rocky, dusty terrain, hauling equipment and personnel from one place to another.

There are several commercial variants being used throughout Afghanistan. Despite their actual brand name, they are commonly referred to as "gators." Individual vehicles are designed with different special features, from blackout lights to litter-carrying capabilities, but overall, their uses are similar.

Gators are about the size of a small golf cart, feature an automatic transmission and require no special training to operate. Those deployed to Forward Operating Base Ripley use the gator primarily for logistical purposes such as picking up mail, passengers and equipment from the flightline, transporting food and fuel cans to locations all over the base. Coalition members are also using them to get to different locations throughout the base.

"We use this piece of equipment every day for a lot of different things," said Staff Sgt. Charlie Pepin, 2nd Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, personnel non-commissioned officer. "This base right here is pretty big, so if we want to get in contact with one of the units, we use this piece of equipment to get to them."

"It's a valuable asset for an infantry unit.

Period. Regardless if it's a heavy unit or a light unit," said Task Force Bobcat Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Leota.

Using the gator also requires less time and manpower than other methods, to accomplish daily missions.

"Normally we'd have to resource a vehicle, such as a (high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle), or HMMWV and a trailer, with of course a vehicle commander — or a TC — and a driver and Soldiers to help unload the supplies. (The gator) can take one person or two to load the supplies and get (them) to where (they) need to go in a pretty good time," said Leota.

The gator runs on diesel or gas fuel and uses far less of it than HMMWVs and civilian vehicles, proving cost efficient for not only individual units but for the military as a whole. Its mobility and light frame also allow it to maneuver quickly and easily into tight spaces or along narrow roadways, reaching areas a truck or HMMWV could not easily get to.

With its increasing popularity comes the issue of safety for those operating the equipment. Drivers and passengers are required to wear a ballistic helmet and eye protection while driving, in addition to reflective belts. Operators are also required to receive a block of instruction from unit



Sgt. Frank Magni  
Spc. Adam Wyatt, HHC, 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt., drives a gator filled with gear to the flightline of FOB Ripley.

safety noncommissioned officers. They are taught proper operating procedures, the importance of wearing the right safety gear while driving, and limitations of the vehicle.

For all its many benefits and convenience, the gator is proving to be a small but powerful tool for Coalition members serving throughout Afghanistan.

## Forecasters: Tracking weather benefits operations

*continued from Page 12*

There are significant differences between briefing pilots of fixed wing aircraft like the A-10s and those piloting helicopters used at Bagram like the CH-47 Chinook and AH-64 Apache. Helicopters travel much lower than fixed wing aircraft, and since the weather can be more turbulent closer to the ground, it can be more challenging to brief, said Long.

"The people who are regularly embedded with Army units are able to provide weather information important to that unit's mission," said Gravier.

"They will know how particular weather will impact the unit and the unit's equipment. It really pays off for both the weather forecasters and the unit. We are able to bring people into a deployment environment who are familiar with the weapons system."

With enough weather information, Soldiers and Airmen can accurately plan operations for bigger impact, said Blanch.

"It means a lot to me to see the troops who are in combat take the weather information we give them and use it to their advantage to defeat those enemies trying to take away the

(Afghan) freedoms."

An Air Force forecaster working with the Army isn't unusual — the Air Force regularly provides weather support to Army units.

"This is a part of the joint environment," said Gravier. "We do provide some assistance to the Marines and the Navy here, since they didn't bring enough aircraft to justify bringing a dedicated forecaster. We don't turn anyone down."

That mission is vital to the success of Operation Enduring Freedom, now moving into a phase where forces

are supporting preparations for elections. The forecasters are well aware of their impact.

"I'm very proud to be here in this crucial time," said Brisendine. "It's great to be here to give men and women, especially women, some of the equal opportunities that I have stateside."

"I am awestruck by the fact that I am contributing to the pages of a future history book," said Blanch. "A book that will describe how a Coalition of many countries provided the means for a democratic process to become possible."

# Safety First: Ground Guide

A photograph of a soldier in a desert environment, wearing a tan uniform and a cap, standing in front of a military vehicle. The soldier is gesturing with his hands, indicating the path or direction for the vehicle. The background shows a desert landscape with some structures and a clear sky. The entire image is framed by a thick red border.

**Proper use of ground guides during vehicle operations prevents injuries and damage to equipment.**